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Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Young professionals in selected organizations of the United Nations system: recruitment, management and retention" (JIU/REP/2000/7).

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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN SELECTED ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM: RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND RETENTION

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ACRONYMS

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
APO	Associate Professional Officers
CCAQ(PER)	Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions)
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
ILO	International Labour Organization
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
IMF	Inernational Monetary Fund
ISCC	Information Systems Coordination Committee
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
MTP	Management Training Programme
NCRE	National Competitive Recruitment Examination
NPO	National Professional Officer
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management (United Nations)
PAMS	Participating Agencies Mobility System
SOA	Special Operational Approach
UN	United Naitons
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
WHO	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: OBJECTIVE, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

OBJECTIVE
To compare and analyse policies and practices in selected organizations of the system with regard to the recruitment and management of entry-level professionals, with a view to making recommendations as to ways to prepare and retain a cadre of dedicated and competent professionals for these organizations.

A. The demographic profile of staff in most organizations of the United Nations (UN) system, where up to half of the members of the secretariats are due to retire during this decade, combined with evolving mandates and policies requiring new types of skills not always available among the current staff, call for a rejuvenation of the human resources of the secretariats and for careful succession planning. A number of statistical factors, however, hamper this rejuvenation by limiting the net intake of younger professionals. These factors include an increase in the age at entry level and, in the case of the United Nations, a steady outflow of young professionals through resignations. Data on separations, and in particular resignations, are not available for all agencies, limiting opportunities to analyse and compare trends.

Recommendation 1

Secretariats should undertake specific efforts to reduce the age at recruitment for all Professional posts, and for P1 to P3 posts in particular. The United Nations Secretariat may wish, for its part, to review the adequacy of the age limit[1] presently imposed for NCRE (National Competitive Recruitment Examination) candidates (see paragraphs 8 to 13).

Recommendation 2

Trends on separations of Professional staff in the United Nations system should be more carefully monitored through :

(*a*) The inclusion by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ (PER)) in its "Personnel Statistics" annual publication of data on separations of professional staff broken down by grade and type of separation;

(*b*) The design of exit questionnaires, by Secretariats that have not yet instituted them, to better identify causes of resignations. Such questionnaires may be completed or replaced by structured exit interviews (see paragraphs 15 to 18).

B. The United Nations is the only organization which recruits young professionals through national competitive recruitment examination, a secure and confidential process which has a positive impact on the quality of recruits but has proved rather cumbersome. Although significant progress has been achieved in this respect, the main weakness of the NCRE still resides in the delays linked to the placement of candidates featured on the roster.

C. The other organizations reviewed recruit young professionals either through targeted programmes or regular vacancy management. While they require significant investments from the secretariats, Young Professional programmes have proved to be, like the NCRE, useful tools for achieving more equitable geographical distribution and gender balance among professional staff, and they can assist in building a sense of loyalty and solidarity among a given generation of staff which may not exist otherwise. All these various recruitment systems, however, tend to involve protracted and overly bureaucratic processes.

Recommendation 3

Secretariats of all organizations concerned should speed up recruitment processes by imposing strict deadlines for the review of applications by managers and the placement of candidates (see paragraphs 35 to 37).

Recommendation 4

Further efforts should be undertaken by the Secretariat to accelerate the placement of successful NCRE candidates, reduce the number

of candidates presently on the roster, and optimize the use of this roster, through:

(*a*) Strengthening linkages between human resources planning, examinations and staffing, which should not be conducted as separate operations but as an integrated process;

(*b*) Submitting proposals to the General Assembly to further contain the number of candidates on the roster, such as time-limitations on its validity or the automatic suspension of the examination in occupational groups for which the roster exceeds a predetermined number of candidates;

(*c*) Sharing the roster with other organizations, especially for common occupational fields (see paragraphs 23 to 25).

Recommendation 5

The General Assembly may wish to call on Member States to cooperate more effectively in the organization of the examination and, in particular, in its publicity. The Secretary-General could also include in regular reports on human resources management examples of good practices in this regard (see paragraph 22).

D. Most young professionals enter the United Nations system with great expectations as to the nature of the tasks which they will be asked to accomplish. However, in several cases, insufficient structures for the integration, orientation and development of staff restrict their ability to make a significant contribution to the work of their organizations, leading to rapid disenchantment. Limited lateral and upward mobility, as well as a general failure of management to provide enough support to young professionals and attention to their concerns and initiatives, can also lead to frustrations and separations.

Recommendation 6

Secretariats that have not done so should set up structures to assist with the successful integration of young professionals during their first months through:

(*a*) Clearly identifying focal points in Personnel/human resources services or substantive departments to assist new recruits with all practical problems;

(*b*) Designing appropriate orientation courses for young professionals. Such courses could be organized jointly with the support of the United Nations Staff College;

(*c*) Instituting mentoring programmes whereby more senior officers can advise young professionals on substantive and career issues (see paragraphs 47 to 50 and paragraph 52).

Recommendation 7

Secretariats of organizations concerned should offer the opportunity to junior professional staff members to pursue studies and research in fields of relevance to their work by making them eligible sooner for study leave or by instituting new part-time study schemes (see paragraph 51).

Recommendation 8

Secretariats of organizations concerned should increase opportunities for young professionals to be assigned both at Headquarters and in the field in the course of their first five or six years. The Secretariat of the United Nations, in particular, should further improve career development for young professionals. In due course, it should assess the impact of its Managed Reassignment Programme to ensure that it facilitates mobility not only between departments but also between duty stations and that it contributes to upward as well as lateral mobility (see paragraphs 53 to 57).

Recommendation 9

Managers in organizations concerned should devote sufficient time and attention to the development of their junior staff. Appraisal of the way in which they discharge this responsibility should be an integral part of their performance evaluation (see paragraphs 58 and 59).

E. While job satisfaction is undoubtedly the most compelling factor in keeping young staff members motivated, progress on "work-life" or "work-family" issues, including enhanced flexibility in the organization of working time and in the workplace, can contribute to creating a supportive work environment for high-calibre employees with

family responsibilities. Interviews conducted for the preparation of the report indicate that of all family-support issues, spouse employment may be the most critical in retaining young professional staff. Little progress has been achieved in recent years as organizations of the common system, unlike other international organizations, still fail to provide significant support to their staff in this area.

Recommendation 10

Efforts to facilitate spouse employment should be undertaken as follows:

(*a*) **Secretariats in major duty stations should set up joint family-career transition programmes;**

(*b*) **Governing bodies of organizations that still forbid spouse employment should rescind this restriction by amending relevant staff regulations;**

(*c*) **The General Assembly should renew its call to Governments in host countries to consider granting work permits for spouses accompanying staff members, and monitor the implementation of relevant resolutions (see paragraphs 70 to 76).**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The rapid ageing of the staff in most organizations of the United Nations system, especially staff in the professional category, has been the cause of debate for a number of years, as these organizations ponder ways to ensure that the large numbers of retirements scheduled for the next few years are matched by an intake of younger staff with appropriate skills. However, this intake, and the retention of performing staff, are by no means guaranteed, as the United Nations system appears to be losing part of its appeal as employer. In 1998, the Secretary-General noted that for the first time in United Nations history, there were more resignations than retirements, and that most of these resignations were occurring at the P2 and P3 levels. It is, he said, as if "having glimpsed the future, those people decided to try their luck elsewhere".[2] A few months later, the General Assembly also expressed concern at the growing number of resignations of staff in the Professional category, and requested the Secretary-General to carry out a study to ascertain the cause of such separations.[3]

2. A higher turnover of staff by itself is not necessarily a negative evolution, as civil services everywhere want to become more permeable and as the notion of lifetime careers in single organizations is increasingly challenged. It also has to be recognized that different agencies operate with different mandates and constraints and have, therefore, different needs in terms of human resources. However, a steady outflow of young professionals from the system could become a serious problem as scores of senior officers leave on retirement. Although specialized agencies do not appear to suffer from retention problems of the same magnitude as the United Nations, the trend observed at the United Nations may be a harbinger of future difficulties in the entire system. At stake is not so much the latter's sustained ability to attract large numbers of applicants, as the need to ensure that these applicants have the right skills, feel motivated and that the best elements among them remain to serve United Nations organizations and assist them in filling their mandates.

3. The Joint Inspection Unit, therefore, decided to include this report in its work programme for 2000, with the hope that it would contribute to the reflection process already engaged in many quarters on these issues by providing an inter-agency perspective and allowing for a comparative analysis of the situation across the system as well as for the sharing of best practices. After a preliminary review of existing documentation, the Inspector assessed that such a comparison would only be meaningful if it concerned organizations with a certain "critical mass" of staff, smaller organizations being confronted with different types of problems in the field of human resources management. Enquiries and research, therefore, were limited to the United Nations, as well as its funds and programmes and specialized agencies with a staff of more than two thousand.[4]

4. In this context, after reviewing the demographic situation of staff in large organizations of the United Nations system, the report looks at statistical factors which are impeding their rejuvenation. It then draws a comparison between the various ways in which organizations recruit young professionals, as well as the ways in which they manage the careers of these young professionals once they are on board, with a special emphasis on the issues of motivation, mentoring, training, mobility and supervision. Finally, issues often described as "work-life issues", which are not strictly related to the immediate professional environment of young professionals but may have a bearing on the ability of organizations to retain and motivate them, are discussed.

5. It should be made clear that for the purpose of this report, the Joint Inspection Unit understands the term "young professionals" to mean professional staff members at the P1, P2 or P3 levels (also referred to as "entry levels"), occupying budgeted posts. They do not include staff sponsored by their respective governments and employed by organizations as Junior Professional Officers (JPOs), Associate Experts or Associate Professional Officers although, as described below, JPOs and Associate Experts are sometimes recruited as regular staff members after the completion of their initial assignments.

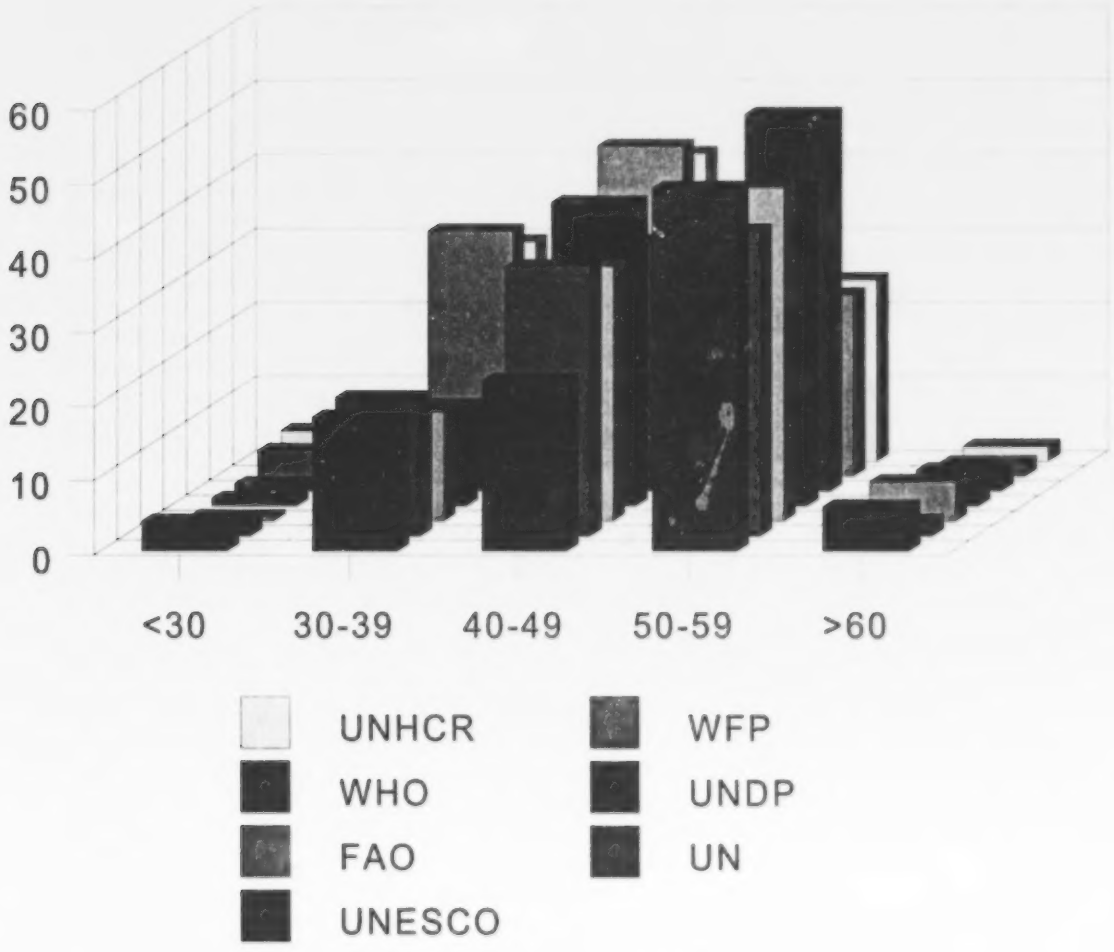
6. The Inspector who coordinated the preparation of this report wishes to extend his appreciation to all those who assisted him in this exercise.

II. SUCCESSION PLANNING: AN IMPERATIVE

A. The need to rejuvenate the staff

7. The demographic profile of staff in most organizations of the United Nations system, where up to half of the members of the secretariats is due to retire during this decade, combined with evolving mandates and policies requiring new types of skills not always available among the staff, call for a rejuvenation of the human resources of the Secretariats and for careful succession planning.

Figure 1: Age distribution of professional staff in selected organizations of the UN system (in percentage)



Sources: UN - Composition of the Secretariat, A/53/375
FAO - Statistics provided by Personnel Division, September 2000
UNDP - Bureau of Management, Human Resources Statistics, April 1999
UNESCO - Statistical Overview of UNESCO staff as of 1/11/99, PER/HRD/PLN
WHO - Human resources: annual report, EB 105/14 Add.1
UNHCR - Statistics provided by Human Resources Service, 2000
WFP - Statistics provided by Human Resources Division, August 2000

8. Figure 1 above illustrates the incidence of ageing of staff in most United Nations organizations, with the greatest number of professional staff in the 40-59 brackets, and especially in the 50-59 bracket. As a result, the average age in most organizations has risen steadily, to reach a figure of between 45

and 50, and large numbers of staff members at the professional and above levels are expected to retire over the next decade (see table 1 below for selected statistics).

Table 1: Age of professional staff and scheduled retirements

	UNESCO	FAO	UNICEF	WHO	ILO	UNHCR	WFP	UN
Average age of professional staff	48.6	48.5	45	48.5	48	44.6	43.8	46
Average age of P2 staff	-	40.13	36	40.2	33	34.8	37.9	38.5*
Percentage of professional staff scheduled to retire in next 5 years	31.5%	28%	8%	28.5%	--	8.3%	7.2%	19.4 %**
In next 10 years	--	47%	27%	52.7%	51%	25.2%	22%	--

Note: *This figure includes all P2s, whether they are recruited through the NCRE or other means, or promoted from the General Service category through competitive examinations.
**This figure relates to the percentage of staff on posts subject to geographical distribution who will retire by the end of 2003. The Secretariat of the United Nations also indicates that a total of 400 staff will be retiring each year for the next five years.

Sources: UN - Composition of the Secretariat, A/54/279 and statistics provided by OHRM, 2000
UNESCO - Statistical overview of UNESCO staff as of 1/11/99, PER/HRD/PLN
UNICEF- Statistics provided by the Division of Human Resources, 2000
FAO - Statistics provided by Personnel Division, 2000
WHO - Human resources: annual report, EB 105/14 Add.1 and statistics provided by General Management
ILO - Statistics provided by Human Resources Development Department, 2000
UNHCR - Statistics provided by Human Resources Service, 2000
WFP - Statistics provided by Human Resources Division, 2000

9. The large numbers of scheduled retirements should not only be seen as an opportunity to cut down on workforces and budgets, as is often the case, but mostly as a chance for organizations to acquire a younger staff with a more modern organizational culture and to ensure an influx of the expert knowledge which they are at present lacking in several emerging fields such as information management and technology, governance, sustainable development and capacity-building. The changes which have occurred on the international stage over the last ten years, competition from various sources including non-governmental organizations and fast-evolving management techniques call for a new staff profile, better aligned with new organizational needs. Entry-level professionals are those most likely to meet these needs and fill an increasing competency gap.

B. Obstacles to replacement

10. There are several factors, however, which hamper this rejuvenation by limiting the intake of younger professionals. In particular, overall statistics for the United Nations system show that 21 per cent of total appointments are made at the P1 to P2 levels while a significant proportion of the workforce continues to be appointed at the P4 and higher levels. More than 50 per cent of new staff members, therefore, are appointed at over 40 years of age.[5] In fact, in some organizations, P3 and P4s have gradually become the normal entry-level posts, to the detriment of P1 and P2s. This is partly due to financial reasons linked to the insufficient competitiveness of salaries offered at the lowest levels of the professional scale.

11. Likewise, a recent report by the United Nations Secretariat showed that one significant factor in the ageing of the staff is the relative high age at the entry level, linked to the steady rise in the age at recruitment. The report states that since1988, the average age at which professional staff enter the Organization has risen by five years.[6] Studies of national public administrations show that this trend is not limited to the United Nations and that in many countries, the age at which people join the civil service is increasing. This is not only because people are staying in school longer, but because the requisite qualifications have also become stricter. The study warns that this results in a trend towards over-qualification of new recruits, and creates a gap between the level of recruiting and the jobs on offer, which can ultimately pose personnel management problems.[7] Chapter IV below analyses at some length this "expectation gap" at the United Nations and other organizations of the system.

12. One way to reduce this gap, restore a satisfactory match between the expectations of recruits and the reality of their first assignments, and ensure a lowering of the age of the staff would be to undertake conscious efforts to reduce the age at recruitment, especially for P1 to P3 posts. Most dedicated recruitment programmes for junior professional positions described in the next chapter already impose age limits beyond which candidates cannot apply. Candidates to the UNESCO Young Professionals Programme, for instance, must be 30 years or younger at the time of their application, while candidates to the equivalent programme at ILO must be less than 32. Candidates to the United Nations NCRE, for their part, must be 32 or less at the time that they take the examination for P2 posts, and 39 or less for P3 posts.

13. Thanks to these limits, the age for young professional recruits at UNESCO is normally 27 or 28, while the age of successful NCRE candidates at the time of placement is, on average, 30 years for P2s and 36 for P3s. It should be noted, however, that a new United Nations recruit aged 30 will probably have several years of professional experience, and expect to be assigned tasks and responsibilities of a nature and level not corresponding to the reality of most P2 posts in the Secretariat, which are "entry-level posts not normally requiring any extensive experience".[8] The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) argues that decreasing the age limit would result in lowering the quality of the staff intake. The Inspector would recommend, however, that a study be conducted by OHRM to identify the number of years of professional experience held on average by new P2s at the time of their placement, in order to ascertain whether or not over-qualification is one of the factors leading to dissatisfaction and resignations. The study could include a comparative review of the age of professionals and their qualifications at the time of their placement in entry-level posts of similar categories in a selected number of national civil services.

14. In addition, the grade structure of professional staff is particularly top-heavy in some organizations, as shown in table 2. This situation, which also contributes to the ageing of their staff, calls for a review of all posts and functions in these organizations to identify opportunities for down-grading posts.

15. Another factor which is hindering the rejuvenation of staff in organizations of the United Nations system is the fact that young professionals seem to be the ones most inclined to leave these organizations. The situation is of particular concern at the United Nations, where between 1 July 1998 and 30 June 1999, more staff resigned than retired (298 resignations, of which 12 were of directors and 113 of professionals, as opposed to 176 retirements). A third of the resignations in the professional category were by staff at the P2 level (although most of these P2s were staff on fixed-term contracts or appointments of limited duration).[9] For the calendar year of 1999, however, there were fewer resignations among P2s and P3s, who together represented 35 per cent of all professional resignations.

Table 2. Grade structure of international professional staff
(Percentage of all staff at the professional and above levels)

	UN	FAO	UNDP	UNHCR	UNICEF	ILO	WHO	UNESCO
P1 to P3	39.3	28	12.6	56.5	36.6	21	18.4	42.7
P4 to P5	47.6	57	58	38.0	55.9	63	66.6	41
D1 to D2	11.4	15	27.9	5.5	7.1	13	14.9	14

Note: UNICEF notes that numbers of international professional staff do not necessarily reflect its real grade structure, as it also relies heavily on National Professional Officers (NPOs). UNICEF presently employs 105 NPOs at the NO-A level (equivalent to P1) and 374 at the NO-B level (equivalent to P2).

Sources: UN - Composition of the Secretariat, A/54/279
UNESCO - Statistical overview of UNESCO's staff as of 1/11/99, PER/HRD/PLN
UNICEF - Statistics provided by the Division of Human Resources, 2000
FAO - Statistics provided by Personnel Division, 2000
WHO - Statistics provided by Human Resources Services, August 2000
UNDP - Bureau of Management, Human Resources Statistics, April 1999
ILO - Composition and structure of the staff, GB.277/PFA/8
UNHCR - Statistics provided by Human Resources Service, 2000

16. Of all the staff recruited at the P2 level through the NCRE since its inception 26 years ago, 22.6 per cent have since resigned, the great majority of them during the first five years of their service, with significant departures, in particular, during the second and third years of service. Of special concern is the fact that among certain nationalities, up to a third and even sometimes half of all NCRE successful candidates have resigned from the United Nations.

17. Since 1999, OHRM has instituted exit questionnaires for staff separating from the Organization, a practice which the Inspector sees as helpful in identifying the specific reasons for these separations, and which could usefully be replicated in those agencies which have not yet adopted it. The rate of return for these questionnaires, however, has so far been very low, although they are supposed to be mandatory. It may be more effective, therefore, to complement or replace these questionnaires by structured exit interviews.

18. Numbers of separations broken down by professional grade are not available for all agencies and funds, impeding meaningful comparative analysis. It would be useful for CCAQ (PER) to include data on separations of professional staff broken down by grade and type of separation in its annual publication on "Personnel Statistics". Some statistics were made available to the Inspector during or after interviews for the report. UNICEF and WFP thus indicate that resignations at the P1 to P3 levels account for 47 per cent and 69.4 per cent respectively of all resignations by international professionals. FAO, for its part, states that resignations by professionals at the P1 to P3 levels have represented, over the course of the last four years, 24.6 per cent of all resignations by staff at the professional or above levels. ILO indicates that resignations of P1 to P3 staff represent 34 per cent of all resignations among professional staff. While statistics on separations at UNDP have not been made available to the Inspector, an internal working paper drafted in 1999 by young and new professionals to "improve recruitment and staffing practices in UNDP" stated that every year, the organization lost a large number of highly qualified and motivated young professionals, especially women, who used their acquired knowledge and skills to move on to other organizations.[10]

19. As stated in the introduction to this report, separations in themselves are not necessarily negative and are a normal part of the evolution of organizations seeking to become more permeable. It is nevertheless important to monitor trends in this respect and to ensure that the organizations of the United Nations system remain able to integrate, develop and retain promising staff to succeed their present leadership.

III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

A. The National Competitive Recruitment Examination

20. Two Joint Inspection Unit reports issued respectively in 1984 and 1995 described at some length the background for the organization of national competitive recruitment examinations conducted yearly by the United Nations, as well as the methodology followed for these examinations, issues on which this report does not need to come back.[11] Twenty years after its inception, the strengths and weaknesses of the NCRE can be described as follows:

Strengths

21. **First,** the system has the strong backing of Member States, who have, year after year, reaffirmed that it is a useful tool for selecting the best-qualified candidates from inadequately represented countries.[12] In 2001, the examination will be administered in at least 38 countries (list reproduced in the annex to this report). **Second,** it is, according to OHRM, relatively cost-competitive. Table 3 shows that in 1999, the estimated cost per successful candidate has dropped to US$ 7,828, partly as a result of simplification of processes and economies of scale. This is cheaper, for instance, than resorting to headhunters, who normally charge a fee equivalent to 20 or 30 per cent of the recruit's annual salary. This cost may be further reduced through the organization of regional competitive examinations, an option suggested in JIU/REP/95/1 (Part I) but which, apparently, has never been seriously explored. The table also shows a significant increase in the number of candidates, which reached more than 8,700 people in 1999 for P2 and P3 posts. The mere fact that the machinery has been able to absorb such an increase in the number of candidates is evidence of the organizational capacity of the examinations section of OHRM. **Third,** the NCRE is a secure, confidential and fair process, which guarantees that the selection is not subject to influence and nepotism, and is, therefore, defensible (there has only been a limited number of appeals over the years). **Finally,** it has contributed to improving gender balance in posts subject to geographical distribution. Of 123 appointments made under the desirable ranges between 1 July 1998 and 30 June 2000, 47 were successful NCRE candidates. Of these 47 appointees, 25 were women (or 53.2 per cent). As a result, the representation of women at the P2 and P3 levels (47.5 per cent and 44 per cent respectively in 1999) is higher than for all professional level posts (38.1 per cent at the same date).[13]

Need for improvement

22. On the other hand, the responsiveness of the NCRE system leaves a great deal to be desired. The process is lengthy and cumbersome, involving no less than ten steps from the moment that the written papers are collected to the placement of candidates on the roster, and lasting one whole year. OHRM has recently instituted a number of changes which should simplify and accelerate the process, but its very nature will make it hard to compress further. Upstream, another difficulty is linked to the uneven quality of the cooperation received from Member States in the organization of examinations, and particularly in publicizing them. The limited resources available to OHRM for this purpose make it impossible to organize missions to promote and advertise the examinations.

23. The greatest weakness of the NCRE, however, resides in the later stages of the process, most particularly in the placement of candidates. Until now, the NCRE programme decisions were not based on an analysis of organizational needs and were not linked to workforce planning. Candidates were identified regardless of actual needs for staff, which resulted in great delays in placement and the increase in candidates on the roster. Some were no longer available when they were finally called. At the beginning of 1999, and before inclusion of the 1998 successful candidates, the list included more than 200 people, some of whom had taken the examination as early as 1991. This situation led Member States to call on the Secretary-General to adapt the number of occupational groups selected for examinations to the requirements of the Organization. It also requested him to ensure that candidates are placed in a timely fashion and that special efforts are made to recruit candidates from the roster until it is cleared.[14] Determined endeavours undertaken by OHRM in the past year and a half to update the roster (by deleting the names of those who were no longer interested or available) and to place candidates, have led to a significant improvement in this area, with only 107 candidates remaining on the roster by August 2000.

Table 3: Number of candidates and cost of examination, NCRE 1996 to 1999

Exam Year	Type of exam	Number of candidates					Average cost per successful candidate (US$)
		Applied	Convoked to exam	Sat for written part	Recom-mended	Placed	
1996	NCRE-P2	2 462	691	412	36	25	13 695
	NCRE-P3	659	110	86	16	9	
1997	NCRE-P2	2 726	726	502	45	27	3 540
	NCRE-P3	520	97	71	16	5	
1998	NCRE-P2	5 814	1 274	768	49	29	12 280
	NCRE-P3	435	68	41	10	7	
1999	NCRE-P2	8 214	2 247	1 402	107	48	7 828
	NCRE-P3	511	63	51	2	1	
Total NCRE-P2 (1996 to 1999)		19 216	4 938 (26% of applicants)	3 084	237 (4.8% of convoked)	129 (54.43% of recommended)	
Total NCRE-P3 (1996 to 1999)		2 125	338 (16% of applicants)	249	44 (13.02% of convoked)	22 (50% of recommended)	

Source : OHRM data

24. OHRM expects that structural improvements brought to the system, such as a better adequacy between the specialized fields in which the examination is offered and actual staff needs, as well as the computerization of the roster and regular communications between OHRM and requesting departments, will prevent the roster from increasing again to similar numbers in the future. The Inspector recommends, however, that mechanisms should be developed to automatically prevent the recurrence of this serious problem. This could include, as previously suggested by OHRM, limiting the validity of the roster to one year, which would have the added advantage of prompting managers to speed up their selection for fear of "missing out" on a particularly interesting candidate. Such a limit could not, of course, apply retroactively to those candidates who took the examinations in years past, and new candidates would need to be clearly informed clearly of this policy.

25. Another possibility would be to suspend examinations in occupational groups in which the roster exceeds a fixed number of candidates, a practice already applied by OHRM and which could be institutionalized. In addition, OHRM may want to consider the possibility of sharing the roster with other organizations of the system which may find it useful to identify potential candidates from non-represented or under-represented countries or with specific skills. CCAQ (PER) could study more general mechanisms for the joint identification of candidates for occupational fields common to all major organizations of the system.

26. As a result of the delays described above, the United Nations is certainly losing some of the best qualified candidates who may accept offers from other employers. OHRM points out that it also loses some very good candidates because of the policy established by the General Assembly in 1953 that persons in permanent resident status in host countries are ineligible for appointment as internationally recruited staff members unless they are prepared to change to a non-immigrant visa status. The policy was adopted because it was considered that "a decision to remain in permanent resident status may weaken the ties with the country of nationality".[15]

27. The JIU Report on Competitive Examinations in the United Nations mentioned above spoke enthusiastically of the "superiority of the national competitive examination method" and stressed that "the quality of the successful candidates recruited has been outstanding". It envisaged, therefore, that once the system had been fully applied in the United Nations, it could be usefully extended not only to the major programmes affiliated to the United Nations, such as UNDP, UNICEF, WFP or UNHCR, but also to other organizations in the United Nations system.[16] In the light of the experience gained in the last fifteen years, the Inspector shares his predecessor's overall positive assessment of the impact of the NCRE on the quality of recruits. Nevertheless, he would not necessarily advocate that this rather cumbersome process be replicated in other organizations which do not have the same constraints or mandates as the United Nations.

B. Young Professionals programmes and regular vacancy management

28. Many large international organizations outside the common system operate well-established Young or Junior Professional programmes. Among them, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation in Europe (OECD), the Inter-American Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank all run specific programmes to recruit professionals at the entry level soon after the completion of their graduate studies. These programmes are seen as the "golden gate of entry" and starting points for careers in these organizations. The three following organizations in the United Nations system operate programmes along the same lines.

29. A Young Professionals programme has existed at ILO since 1982, although until now it has not really been a separate career development programme but rather a simplified recruitment process through which one third of the vacant professional level posts was supposed to be filled each year. However, the secretariat recently announced a "major new initiative", whereby it will now commit itself to the annual recruitment of around ten young professionals to participate in a structured five-year training and development Young Professionals programme. The programme will be aimed at young people with very high potential, primarily from under-represented countries and biased towards young women.[17] A university degree (preferably at the master's or doctoral levels) will be a requirement, but work experience, although "desirable", will not be. The yearly process will start in October with prospection missions and advertisements. After reviewing applications, approximately 24 candidates will be invited to go through an ILO Assessment Centre, a process which will include being interviewed by senior officials and submitting written papers. Appointment offers will be made in August or September of each year to the ten best performing candidates and they will all be expected to join the Programme in January of the following year.

30. The UNESCO Young Professional programme was reactivated in 1989 and has since allowed the recruitment of 69 young professionals, all from non-represented or under-represented States. Recruitment campaigns are launched every year through the national commissions of UNESCO, and several hundred candidates normally send in applications including essay-type questions. Candidates must hold a university degree. The best among them are brought to headquarters for language examinations and interviews which focus on general questions and problem-solving skills. The objectives of the programme are threefold: to rejuvenate the secretariat, to improve gender balance and to ensure more equitable geographic distribution among professionals. During their first year, the cost of which is charged to the programme, young professionals benefit from on-the-job experience and an intensive tailor-made training programme. After one year, their performance is assessed prior to their being assigned to a regular post. UNESCO now hopes to recruit ten young professionals each year through the programme.

31. UNDP established a Management Training Programme (MTP) in 1988 to recruit new staff at the professional level from among JPOs, national staff in country offices and external applicants. The MTP was described to the Inspector as a highly competitive screening process through which between 10 and 20 candidates were recruited each year. Because of post cuts, however, it has not operated since 1996, and has been held only twice since 1993. In any case, the Programme differs from the Young Professional programmes described above in that its participants were mostly selected from a pool of internal candidates based on the recommendation of the immediate supervisor, which might have led to insufficient transparency. The Administrator has now announced that the programme will be resumed, and it is expected that some 20 young people will be identified in 2000, from a larger pool of applicants. Eligibility

requirements will include a master's degree plus at least five years work experience.

32. It should be noted that none of the three programmes mentioned above are the exclusive recruitment avenue for entry-level professionals in the organizations concerned. Some P2 posts are also sometimes filled through regular vacancy management. A number of other agencies (including WHO, UNHCR, FAO and UNICEF) recruit all their young staff through regular vacancy management, by advertising vacant posts and applying their normal selection processes for recruitment at the professional levels. In UNICEF, for instance, JPOs, NPOs and General Service Staff may apply to any post which is advertised internally and for which they consider themselves suitably qualified. It should be noted, however, that FAO has recently decided to establish, as part of its human resources management strategy, a targeted recruitment programme, which should be implemented within the next two years.

33. WFP, for its part, has instituted since the end of 1998 a new system whereby it maintains rosters of qualified candidates, from which managers must recruit when vacancies occur. There are currently ten such rosters, some of which are divided into sub-rosters. The professional rosters cover a range of 17 different profiles. Specific vacancy announcements are only issued if there is no profile from a roster or if no suitable candidate can be identified from the roster, which is an exception.

C. Comparative advantages and disadvantages of these various recruitment schemes

34. It was pointed out to the Inspector that targeted recruitment programmes present the risk of creating unrealistic expectations among young professionals in terms of careers, and tend to churn out recruits with general skills, regardless of the specific needs of posts actually available. This can lead to delays or difficulties in placement such as those described above for the NCRE, delays which have also occurred to a certain extent with the MTP at UNDP (it took nearly two years to place all the 14 candidates recruited through the MTP in 1996). In UNESCO, it has also been increasingly difficult to identify suitable posts for graduates of the Young Professionals programme, due to budgetary constraints.

35. Dedicated programmes also tend to be tied to specific schedules and may not be flexible enough for organizations which need to recruit in very short time-frames to deal with emergencies. UNHCR thus indicated that the average time which elapsed, in 1999, between the posting of a vacancy announcement and the actual job offer was 76 days for posts filled externally.

36. In most agencies, however, the recruitment process through vacancy management is as lengthy as that involved in a Young Professional programme. WHO, for instance, indicated that the whole process, from the issuance of the vacancy announcement to the actual job offer took, on average, six to eight months. In FAO, it takes on average 250 processing days from the issuance of a vacancy announcement to the final selection of the candidate by the Director-General. In ILO, 11 months normally elapse between the time that the Human Resources Development Department is informed of the vacancy and the time that the post is actually filled. In many cases, the most extensive delays occur at the stage of selection by line managers. While these delays may be accepted by internal candidates as unavoidable bureaucratic occurrences, they are certainly discouraging to external candidates, especially young ones, and risk repelling the best among them. The Inspector recommends, therefore, that Human Resources or Personnel Departments impose stricter deadlines on managers for their review of applications.

37. The Inspector also noted the significant progress which WFP said it had achieved in reducing the time needed for the recruitment process (from the date the post was authorized for external recruitment to the date that the selected person entered on duty), from an average of 7.5 to 9.5 months under its former system of vacancy announcements to a current 3.5 to 5 months under the new roster system described in paragraph 33 above.

38. Young Professional programmes and competitive examinations, on the other hand, can help organizations reduce the age at recruitment through the age limits imposed on applicants, as discussed in chapter II. They can also ensure that entry-level positions are genuinely used for the intake of young professionals rather than as an end-of-career reward for General Service Staff, which is the case in some organizations. In addition, by being mostly reserved for candidates from non-represented and under-represented countries, they are very useful tools for achieving more equitable geographical distribution among professional staff.

39. Operating Young Professionals programmes may also assist agencies, funds and programmes avoid an excessive reliance on JPOs and Associate Experts as the main pool of candidates for posts at the P2 and P3 levels. JPO, Associate Expert or Associate Professional Officer (APO) programmes are normally intended to provide organizations with specialized expertise financed by a limited number of Member States wishing to contribute to technical cooperation actions. Currently, at UNICEF, 45 per cent of P2 posts are filled by JPOs, although the organization notes that NPOs, mostly from developing countries, are also a "good source for the recruitment of international professionals". UNHCR also relies heavily on JPOs. In the past five years, it has recruited 185 of them, as compared to 108 other staff recruited at the P1, P2 or P3 levels.

40. Although the programmes have functioned satisfactorily for many years, ensuring an influx of much-needed knowledge and skills into beneficiary organizations, and although it is natural for the latter to attempt to retain the best and most motivated among these young experts, the programmes were never meant to act as an avenue of recruitment. However, there have, on occasions, been deviations, with Member States asking that their experts be stationed at headquarters and assigned core-type functions, thinking that they stood a better chance of being ultimately recruited as staff members. Thus, 40 per cent of the WHO APOs are posted at headquarters, while 50 per cent of the UNESCO Associate Experts stay in Paris. This could lead, potentially, to distortions in geographical distribution of professional staff, as well as imbalances in selection criteria and standards, as these experts are selected originally by their governments and not by the receiving organizations. At present, however, the proportion of JPOs or Associate Experts who actually stay on as staff after the completion of their assignment is generally small.

41. Recruitment through a specific programme can limit the tendency observed in a number of organizations to use short-term or consultant contracts, or special service agreements, to "try out" young staff before converting them to fixed-term contracts, sometimes bypassing normal selection processes and often maintaining such staff in very precarious professional situations. This trend is a deviation from the intended purpose of short-term contracts or special service agreements, which are normally used to make resources available for punctual, non-recurrent and "non-core" functions.

42. At a time when a number of organizations are trying to define the basic skills, attributes and behaviours required to effectively discharge core functions, it may be easier to integrate a competency-based approach to recruitment through Young Professional programmes or yearly competitive examinations. This approach would ensure that newly recruited staff all possess or can acquire such essential competencies. This does not mean that these staff would be overly homogenous nor that they should be composed mostly of "generalists". Some agencies with rather technical mandates have argued that these "generic" recruitment systems would not be suited to their activities. Young Professional programmes can actually be tailored to recruit candidates with specialized knowledge and technical skills. They may also be able to build a sense of loyalty, solidarity and belonging within a given generation of staff which may not exist otherwise. On the other hand, it has to be recognized that the development and implementation of targeted recruitment and integration programmes for Young Professionals require significant investments from the secretariats.

43. In fact, the different policies described above correspond (or should correspond) to distinct approaches to the very concepts of career and international civil service. Those organizations which opt for a high turnover and which no longer believe in the notion of a long-term career tend to favour flexible recruitment arrangements which match candidates with the specific requirements of individual posts. Those which still believe in developing a core of career civil servants, and in building on institutional memory, prefer to recruit young professionals through a specific programme and to develop a cadre of leaders with recognized competencies. The General Assembly, for its part, has underlined the importance of the concept of career service for staff members performing continuing core functions.[18] Neither approach needs to be mutually exclusive, and both can probably be reconciled, but the nature and number of posts related to these core functions need to be clearly identified and recruitment systems adapted accordingly.

IV. REDUCING THE EXPECTATION GAP

44. Once on board, young professionals should be enticed to produce to the maximum of their abilities, and the skills for which they have been selected should be fully utilized. Most enter the United Nations system with great expectations as to the nature of the work which they will be asked to accomplish. Symptomatically, young professionals at UNDP cite among their expectations the following:

- "The opportunity to explore and reach their professional limits in an organization that fosters initiative and diversity;"
- "To play a meaningful role in managing the present, and creating the future, of UNDP."[19]

45. These expectations are legitimate. A recent study of national public administrations has shown that high-performing career public-sector executives can usually obtain higher salaries by pursuing private sector employment. For most of them, the principal reason they choose to join and stay with the public sector is the social significance and challenging nature of the work performed by governmental institutions. The study highlights, therefore, that since it is unlikely that the public sector will ever be able to fully compete with the private sector on compensation alone, it is essential that it should make full use of its major competitive advantage in this area - the very way it performs. The study recommends that administrations should "build on the ethos of public service" and that in recruiting, developing, and nurturing future leaders, they should consciously attempt to give promising staff opportunities to test and develop leadership skills by working on the most complex and important public sector problems.[20]

46. Interviews held during the course of preparation of this report, however, showed that among the most important factors leading to frustration and demotivation, and eventually to separations, were the perceived lack of opportunity offered to young professionals in the system to make a significant contribution to the work of their organizations and a certain "devaluation" of the staff in general. This trend is a serious cause for concern and in order to reverse it, new human resources strategies should be adopted and implemented that recognize that the skills, abilities and motivation of staff are integral to the delivery of the highest quality products and services.[21]

A. Staff integration, induction and development

47. Efforts should first be undertaken to develop support structures which will assist young recruits in the very first stages of their integration. The importance of such structures should not be underestimated, as their absence may have a negative impact on the perception which new staff members have of their employer and of the professional environment in which they are entering, as well as on their ability to perform rapidly.

48. Candidates recruited by the United Nations through the NCRE, for instance, and assigned to Headquarters in New York, are provided with very scant information on practical issues linked to their settling in that city. They should receive a full package of information on such issues, as well as on first administrative steps which they will have to undertake at the United Nations, even before leaving their home country or previous place of employment. OHRM has instituted a "buddy system" within its own department, whereby each new recruit, at all levels, is assigned a "buddy" who can help him/her with such mundane tasks as opening a bank account as well as navigating the complex bureaucracy. Relying on the goodwill of busy colleagues, however, may not be enough and the Inspector recommends that focal points should be very clearly identified, and adequate resources provided, for this purpose both in the receiving departments as well as in personnel services at each duty station. These focal points would also be responsible for ensuring that new staff are provided with the tools necessary to their work, be they desks, computers, telephones or access to electronic mail services. The Inspector notes that the ILO Human Resources Development Department has recently identified such a focal point to help young professionals in their integration and career development.

49. Organizations should also ensure that young professionals are offered orientation courses in the first months following their entry on duty. For many years, NCRE successful candidates at the United Nations were only offered cursory induction courses at their duty stations, lasting one or two days at most. The Inspector, therefore, welcomes the orientation programme which was set up in 1997 for new professional staff. The objectives of the programme, which lasts five days, are to " provide information, guidance and training in support of the career transition to a Professional position in the United Nations", and to "develop a network of junior

professional colleagues". Topics covered during the session include people management skills, collaborative negotiation skills, career management and professional development, drafting reports as well as United Nations human resources policies, benefits, and systems. Sessions for groups of 25 NCRE successful candidates are held twice a year at Headquarters in New York. New recruits, therefore, are normally invited to a session within a few months of their entry to the United Nations. In addition, ongoing contact by regular or electronic mail and through follow-up meetings is maintained with the Young Professionals, who can also apply to follow courses offered to the staff at large (such as courses in Supervisory Skills, Conflict Resolution or the Upgrading of Substantive Skills as well as summer workshops run by the Academic Council on the United Nations System). While this represents important progress, especially considering the limited overall resources available for training in the Organization, it still falls short of providing new professionals with a comprehensive training package delivered in an incremental and systematic fashion over the course of their first years.

50. In UNESCO, part of the success of the Young Professionals programme can certainly be attributed to the fact that these young professionals follow an induction and training programme during 24 Fridays of their first year. The training programme being developed by ILO within the framework of its new Young Professionals programme will be even more exhaustive. Over the course of four years, young professionals will participate every six months in an intensive training programme organized in collaboration with the ILO International Training Centre in Turin. This programme will focus on enhancing management skills and improving personal effectiveness techniques. The Inspector would suggest that, should this experience be assessed positively after a few years, other organizations should take advantage of the expertise which the International Training Centre will have developed in the process. Common sessions offered by the Centre or by the United Nations Staff College to young professionals from various organizations could even be envisaged, allowing young professionals to build networks beyond their own immediate offices and offering economies of scale. This latter point is particularly important, most organizations of the system being allocated limited resources for their overall staff training development programmes, sometimes representing as little as 0.13 per cent and rarely more than 1 per cent of total payroll.

51. Several organizations offer the possibility to their staff of taking study leave (sometimes referred to as "sabbatical leave") in order to pursue studies and research. This option, however, is rarely offered to young staff members who have not served with the organization for a given number of years.[22] It was pointed out to the Inspector that young staff working in rather technical or specialized fields tend to leave the United Nations system rapidly for fear of becoming "de-skilled" and losing touch with state-of-the-art research and practices in their respective fields. It is suggested, therefore, that guidelines for the entitlement to such leave be reviewed to allow staff to apply within shorter time-frames, which would ensure that the organizations keep abreast of the latest relevant developments in their fields and that performing staff are encouraged to stay on through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. Secretariats may also want to study the possibility of accommodating staff who wish to undertake studies or research on topics of relevance to their work on a part-time basis.

52. In addition to formal training, agencies are increasingly aware of the need for young professionals to receive guidance and advice from senior colleagues or "mentors" who are not their supervisors. ILO, for instance, is piloting a Mentoring Programme, whereby each young professional will have the possibility of being paired with an older and more experienced ILO official who can provide coaching, support and advice as necessary. The Inspector recommends that the practice be generalized in all organizations of the United Nations systems, while recognizing that mentoring programmes may be difficult to institute in very decentralized organizations, such as UNHCR, where young professionals may be assigned to small field offices.

B. Career management

53. The gap between the expectations of young recruits and the reality with which they are confronted may be at its widest with regard to the nature of their assignments in their first years in the United Nations system. In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General in November 1998, a group of some 80 young professionals at the P2 and P3 levels wrote that most of the resignations observed at the junior level were not due to a lack of enthusiasm on their part, willingness to serve or commitment to the Organization, but rather to a certain degree of frustration and disillusionment with the inadequacy of career development opportunities and job enrichment after the recruitment process. Although

young staff in other organizations of the system may not be resigning in the same proportions, they voice similar frustrations. Organizations, therefore, need to attach greater attention to the nature, number and progression of assignments given to young professionals. The initial placement is crucial and considerable efforts must be made to better match people's skills with their posts.

54. Early mobility and exposure to different types of functions and different environments are also essential to the retention and development of staff. Organizations such as UNHCR, UNICEF and UNDP that have inbuilt rotational systems, believe that the latter assist them in motivating and retaining their staff. The Inspector shares this assessment and stresses the importance of exposing young professionals to both headquarters and field experience in their first years. Most young professional programmes, be they at UNESCO and ILO or in other organizations such as IMF or the World Bank, involve assignments in different departments over the course of the first 12 to 24 months. The new ILO Young Professional Career Entrance Programme, for instance, will offer the opportunity of two rotational field assignments as well as two headquarters assignments during the five-year programme.

55. For the first twenty years that followed its inception, however, the United Nations NCRE was limited to the recruitment and initial placement of staff and did not concern itself with their subsequent careers. As a result, many stayed in their original positions until their first promotions. Many of these promotions occurred within their departments. Young professionals assigned to regional commissions found it particularly difficult to obtain a transfer to other duty stations or Headquarters.

56. The Inspector, therefore, welcomes the launch of the Managed Reassignment Programme for Junior Professional Staff.[23] The programme, launched in January 2000, is applicable to staff recruited at the P-2 level through the NCRE and is intended to afford them the benefit of at least two assignments under two different supervisors in their first five years of service. After two or three years in their first post, these staff members will participate in the reassignment programme to move to a second post with a new supervisor. A compendium of P2-posts will be circulated twice a year in order to give all eligible staff members a chance to apply. For the purpose of the programme, however, "mobility" will not necessarily be across duty stations nor even interdepartmental, and could be intradepartmental. It would be useful, therefore, for OHRM to undertake, in due course, an assessment of the impact of this new Reassignment Programme to ensure, *inter alia*, that it facilitates mobility not only between departments but also between duty stations.

57. According to statistics provided by OHRM, two thirds of young professionals recruited ten years ago through the NCRE have only been promoted once, while a majority of those recruited in 1995 have never been promoted. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the Managed Reassignment Programme is in line with present efforts to facilitate upward as well as lateral mobility. Young professionals at UNDP also talk of their "limited career prospects" and of the need to change the performance evaluation systems. Although changes have already been and continue to be brought to these systems in many organizations, they often remain intrinsically incapable of recognizing outstanding performance and rewarding it with rapid promotion. The rigidity of promotion systems and seniority requirements, in particular, makes it difficult for prior professional experience to be taken into account, and young professionals may be barred from applying for posts for which external candidates with less overall experience will eventually be selected.

C. Changing the corporate culture

58. The study of national public administrations cited above stressed that "a critical step for increasing the ability of public sector organizations to develop and nurture more leaders is for top management to recognize that it must devote far more time and attention to leadership development than is now the case". The study went on to show that "best practice in the most successful private businesses is for senior executives to develop a significant portion of their time (up to 25 per cent) to developing leaders".[24] Experience in organizations of the United Nations system shows, however, that many managers are either unavailable, unwilling or incapable of providing such attention to their young professional staff and are rarely held accountable for their performance in this regard. At headquarters, in particular, but less so in smaller field structures, a strong vertical hierarchy discourages direct contacts between P2s or P3s and officials at the level of Director and above. As a result, many senior officials know little about the skills and potential of their junior staff and expect them to assume functions without assistance.

59. Increasingly, staff are calling for "360° evaluation processes" or "reverse reviews" to be established, which allow them to provide feedback on the managerial skills of their supervisors, although practice has shown that such mechanisms can be difficult to set up. Increased focus on "people management" training for senior officials is welcome, but real changes in this field will only occur when adequate supervision and staff development become inherent parts of managers' responsibilities rather than an extra effort which only the most motivated among them are willing to provide.

60. As supervisors often fail to hear young professionals' concerns and to relay them to general management, young professionals may feel that there is no channel of communication and consultations for them to contribute to the rapid changes occurring in organizations of the United Nations system. Established staff representative bodies tend to represent mostly the interests of General Service staff or older professional staff, with whom young professionals may not feel a strong commonality of interests. It is important, therefore, that participating organizations institute some kind of informal but permanent channel of communications to ensure that a constructive dialogue involving young professionals can take place.

V. CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

61. While job satisfaction is certainly the most compelling factor in keeping young staff motivated and interested, conditions of service must also be adequate. As noted in chapter IV, a comparison of salaries and benefits offered to young professionals by the United Nations with those offered by other international organizations not part of the common system, including IMF, the World Bank or the World Trade Organization, or by regional organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development or the European Union (EU), not to mention the private sector, would certainly show that the United Nations system is at some disadvantage in terms of what it can offer to the bright young professionals it wants to attract and retain.

62. Some observers point out that unattractive basic salaries could be complemented by performance awards. Stressing the need to motivate staff anew and recognize outstanding performance, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) has recommended on a number of occasions the introduction of a system of performance awards or bonuses.[25] The General Assembly also asked executive heads of all agencies to make operational proposals to their respective governing bodies on the possibility of introducing such a system.[26] Discussions on the practical steps needed to implement this recommendation, however, have shown the difficulty of establishing a fair and efficient system of rewards, especially if no additional resources are made available for this specific purpose, and have demonstrated that it could only occur within the context of a major reform of human resources management and performance management systems. Furthermore, as the Secretary-General has rightly observed, the development of performance awards or bonus systems cannot and should not be a substitute for fair and adequate compensation that ensures competitive conditions of service, nor should it be a replacement for promotion and career development opportunities.[27] Even if agreement was reached on policies and procedures for the granting of awards and bonuses, its impact on the overall motivation of young professionals would not, however, be sufficient.

63. It was also pointed out to the Inspector that organizations of the United Nations system offer greater job security than many other employers. In fact, most organizations have, over the last decade, instituted moratoriums on permanent or career service appointments. Although the United Nations Secretariat still offers permanent appointments to staff members who have passed the NCRE after successful completion of a two-year period of probationary service, recent proposals by OHRM call for the abolition of such initial probationary and subsequent permanent contracts for NCRE staff.[28]

A. The Work-Family Agenda

64. This trend may not affect young professionals who are not overly concerned with the stability of their work environment. Many of them, on the other hand, do seek a constructive and flexible professional environment, as recognized by ICSC as well as the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which have stressed the need to incorporate contemporary approaches to balancing work and family needs in compensation and benefit packages. In 1995, the executive heads of all the agencies of the United Nations common system in ACC adopted a policy to foster a supportive work environment in each organization aimed both at promoting productivity and enabling staff members to respond to the conflicting pressures of work and family life. They recognized the changing demographics and societal changes which have affected the workplace, citing the following, among others: a larger proportion of the workplace is female; there are more and more working mothers; couples increasingly pursue dual careers; more employees deal with the problems of elderly parents; family situations and structures are even more diverse. They stressed that measures which allowed employees to meet their family responsibilities alongside those arising out of their work are all the more important in an expatriate setting if organizations are to maximize their utilization of human resources, and that costs which may be associated with such measures can be expected to be outweighed by benefits in terms of lower absenteeism and improved motivation.[29]

65. Measures listed in the ACC "work-family agenda" included:

- Enhanced flexibility in the organization of working time and in the workplace, sometimes referred to as "flexitime" and "flexi-place" or "telecommuting";
- Leave arrangements which will allow staff to attend to personal emergencies and family obligations;

- Assistance with dependent care and other family support services, including spouse employment.

While these issues are not restricted to younger professionals, the latter are particularly concerned with them, as they include a larger proportion of women and tend to be more aware than their elders of workplace arrangements promoted in other organizations or in private companies.

66. Five years after the adoption of this ambitious agenda, however, it appears that many organizations have done little progress in instituting and/or implementing work-life policies. Even those which have taken important steps favouring flexibility in principle recognize that in practice, only support staff benefit from them. Reluctance from managers, rigid job descriptions as well as complex budgetary and personnel procedures make it difficult for professional staff to take advantage of new measures.

67. Mention should be made, nevertheless, of efforts undertaken by some organizations in the areas of "flexitime" and "flexi-place". The United Nations Secretariat, for instance, has established an internal Work/Life Committee which has initiated the Family Leave Policy, since endorsed by CCAQ and adopted by all organizations of the common system. An adoption leave policy and provisions for staggered hours have also been promulgated by the organization. Its Office at Geneva (UNOG), for its part, has made it possible for Professional and General Service staff to work 80 per cent time on the basis of a regular four-day working week. The option is open to United Nations staff members holding permanent appointments or who have been employed under fixed-term appointments for at least three consecutive years, and is conditional on the approval of the direct supervisor based on the exigencies of the service concerned.[10] If only for the sake of consistency, this option should be made available to all staff in the rest of the United Nations Secretariat, where possibilities only exist for half-time employment, an alternative very rarely used by Professional staff.

68. As for UNDP, it is, to the knowledge of the Inspector, the only organization to have developed extensive "telecommuting guidelines". The guidelines describe the modalities under which a staff member may be allowed to work, on a full or part-time basis, from an alternate worksite. They include a "Telecommuting Compact" whereby the staff member agrees to provide all necessary hardware that may be required for his or her telecommuting and to upgrade this equipment to meet organization standards as and when necessary. Under the Compact, the staff member is also responsible for establishing and keeping specific telecommuting work hours and making these known to his or her supervisor and immediate colleagues.[11]

69. Organizations with large numbers of staff employed in non-family duty stations, often dealing with humanitarian emergencies, have also tried to reduce the time that these staff must spend away from their families. UNICEF, for instance, has elaborated a Special Operational Approach (SOA) designed to keep families of staff members serving at non-family duty stations within travelling/weekend distance. Similarly, UNHCR offers a number of options for the relocation of families when staff are transferred to non-family duty stations.

B. Spouse employment

70. Interviews conducted for the preparation of this report indicate that of all family support issues, spouse employment may be the most critical in retaining professional staff. As early as 1993, the General Assembly stressed that "employment possibilities for spouses accompanying staff members contribute to attracting and retaining the most qualified staff". The General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to review with his colleagues in ACC ways to improve coordination and reduce impediments to the employment of qualified spouses accompanying staff members of the United Nations common system organizations.[12]

71. Despite the inclusion of this topic on the ACC work-family agenda, little progress has been achieved in recent years in this regard. The Inspector welcomes the Participating Agencies Mobility System (PAMS), developed through the joint efforts of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions/Personnel and General Administrative Questions and the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC), as a positive step towards increased inter-agency cooperation in this field. One of the expressed goals of the PAMS is to facilitate spouse employment in the United Nations system. Individual staff members in participating agencies, or their spouses, can simply enter their résumé on-line for transmission by e-mail to the agency or agencies of their choice. Follow-up is supposed to be conducted between the parties when a suitable vacancy arises. While it is too early to assess the real impact on spouse employment and staff motivation of a system which was launched early in 2000, its mere existence is a witness to a growing

awareness among United Nations agencies of the need to take decisive steps in an area long neglected.

72. These agencies should also amend any staff regulation or rule that prevents or restricts the recruitment of spouses of staff members. FAO, for instance, still forbids spouses to apply for vacant posts, while UNESCO only allows it in exceptional circumstances, although it is presently considering deleting references to prohibition on spouse employment. While there cannot of course be an automatic entitlement to a post, and while spouses cannot be given preference by mere virtue of their relationship, they should at least be allowed to compete fairly for posts for which they are qualified. Appropriate controls ensuring that related staff members are not assigned to serve in a post in the same unit or do not participate in the taking of an administrative decision affecting the employment status or entitlements of the related staff member can then be put in place, as they have been in organizations which no longer apply a ban on spouse employment.

73. Naturally, employment needs of spouses exceed by far the employment opportunities within the United Nations system, especially at a time when most organizations are downsizing. Consequently, it is necessary to expand the search for such employment opportunities beyond the scope of the United Nations system to encompass the whole local labour market. The first step is for organizations to ensure that spouses are legally authorized to work locally. While this is the case in many countries hosting the headquarters of United Nations organizations, there are still duty stations, including some with large numbers of staff, where spouses are not allowed to seek employment.

74. The Inspector notes that the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations has stated that future standard agreements made between the Organization and host countries should contain a provision on spouse employment opportunities, such as the granting of work permits to these individuals. While he urges all United Nations organizations to adopt this practice, he believes that they should also seek a renegotiation of those agreements with host countries that do not provide for automatic or quasi-automatic entitlement of spouses to work permits and calls on host Member States to grant such entitlement, as already suggested by the General Assembly.[33]

75. Being authorized to work locally will not automatically lead to spouses finding employment in labour markets that may be very alien to them, and they need special support in this respect. Particularly noteworthy is the Family Career Transition Programme jointly operated in Washington by the World Bank and IMF.[34] IMF states that the Programme's experienced career counsellors are ready to offer advice and personal support to help spouses of new recruits or staff recently transferred to the organizations' headquarters. They assist spouses to clarify their career goals; to assess their interests, skills and qualifications in relation to opportunities available on the local market; and to write résumés and prepare for interviews. Spouses are encouraged to contact the Programme's counsellors even before reaching Washington.

76. While sufficient resources may not be available at the moment for organizations of the common system to offer similar services to staff and their families separately, these organizations could pool their resources in major duty stations where several have their headquarters and operate joint programmes along the lines of the Family Career Transition Programme. Such programmes would provide a much wider range of services than those offered at the moment, for instance, by the Staff Counsellor's office of the United Nations in New York, which can only help spouses with the legal formalities leading to the obtention of the work permit. They would build on the understanding already reached between agencies with the recent introduction of the Participating Agencies Mobility System.

ANNEX

Countries participating in the 2001 National Competitive Recruitment Examination programme (countries confirmed as of August 2000)

1. Andorra
2. Antigua and Barbuda
3. Argentina
4. Austria
5. Bahrain
6. Bosnia and Herzegovina
7. Brunei Darussalam
8. Cambodia
9. China
10. Germany
11. Grenada
12. Honduras
13. Iceland
14. Italy
15. Japan
16. Kazakhstan
17. Kiribati
18. Kyrgyztan Republic
19. Liechtenstein
20. Malta
21. Marshall Islands
22. Federated States of Micronesia
23. Republic of Moldova
24. Monaco
25. Norway
26. Oman
27. Palau
28. Samoa
29. Sao Tome and Principe
30. Saudi Arabia
31. Solomon Islands
32. Sweden
33. Tajikistan
34. Tonga
35. United Arab Emirates
36. United States of America
37. Uzbekistan
38. Vanuatu

NOTES

1. The age limit is 32 for candidates for P2 posts.
2. Secretary-General's address to the staff on the occasion of Staff Day, 18 September 1998, press release SG/SM/6705.
3. Human Resources Management, General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/221 of 23 April 1999.
4. The organizations reviewed for the report are the following: United Nations, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, FAO, ILO, UNESCO and WHO.
5. Report of the ICSC Working Group on the Framework for Human Resources Management, ICSC/51/R.9, 14 February 2000.
6. "Composition of the Secretariat", Report by the Secretary-General, A/53/375, 11 September 1998.
7. "Structure of the civil service employment in seven OECD countries", OECD Public Management Service, 1999.
8. See http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin.
9. "Composition of the Secretariat", Report of the Secretary-General, A/54/279, 26 August 1999.
10. "Capturing Young and New Energies", Recommendations from Young and New Professionals to Improve Recruitment and Staffing Practices in UNDP, Input to Transition Team, 30/08/99.
11. "Inspection of the Application of United Nations Recruitment, Placement and Promotion Policies", JIU/REP/95/1 (Part I), and "Report on Competitive Examinations in the United Nations", JIU/REP/84/11.
12. See, in particular, A/RES/53/221 of 23 April 1999.
13. "Composition of the Secretariat", Report of the Secretary-General, A/54/279, 26 August 1999.
14. See A/RES/53/221 of 23 April 1999.
15. ST/AI/294 of 16 August 1982.
16. "Report on Competitive Examinations in the United Nations", JIU/REP/84/11.
17. ILO Human Resources Strategy, GB.277/PFA/10, March 2000.
18. A/RES/51/226 of 25 April 1997.
19. "Capturing Young and New Energies, op. cit.
20. "Beyond Training: Developing and Nurturing Leaders for the Public Sector", OECD Public Management Service, PUMA/SGF (99)9, 12 August 1999.
21. "Work and well-being : Work and family responsibilities in the ILO", GB.277/PFA/11, March 2000.
22. At the United Nations, for instance, ST/AI/2000/4 sets the eligibility criteria at five years of service with the Organization.
23. OHRM Highlights No. 10, February 2000.
24. "Beyond Training: Developing and Nurturing Leaders for the Public Sector", op. cit.
25. Report of the International Civil Service Commission, A/49/30, 1 January 1994.
26. See A/RES/51/216 of 18 December 1996 and A/RES/52/219 of 3 February 1998.

27. Performance Management, Report by the Secretary-General, A/53/266 of 14 August 1998.

28. "Managing people, not posts--the next stage of human resources management reform", United Nations, May 2000.

29. "Work/family agenda", CCAQ (PER), 1995. (see http://accsubs.unsystem.org/ccaqper/publications).

30. Part-time employment (80%), IC/Geneva/4455, 11 November 1998.

31. UNDP Work Life Policy, UNDP/OHR/BPRM/1999.

32. A/RES/47/226 of 30 April 1993.

33. Ibid.

34. See "Work and Environment" on the recruitment page of the http://www.imf.int Web site.